

## **SAFETY AND WELFARE AT DOWNING PLACE UNITED REFORMED CHURCH, CAMBRIDGE**

**The following Statement about safety and welfare was agreed by the Minister and Elders of Downing Place United Reformed Church, who are also the Trustees of its charitable funds, on 15<sup>th</sup> July 2020. The document is known as our ‘Safeguarding Policy Statement’.**

- 1. In July 2020, the General Assembly of the United Reformed Church formally adopted a ‘Safeguarding Strategic Plan’ to cover the period 2020-2025. That document begins with the following words: “Safeguarding people is a core part of the URC’s mission. We safeguard the integrity of creation, and we all walk the way together as one Church and one body to ensure the Church is a sustained community of care where everyone – particularly the most vulnerable – find a place of love, pastoral care and support”.**
  
- 2. The congregation of Downing Place United Reformed Church strongly endorses the above statement by General Assembly, and has adopted this Safeguarding Policy Statement to guide our local approach to safeguarding.**
  
- 3. We affirm the importance of ensuring the safety and welfare of all** who come to our church premises, or who are involved in any way in any of the activities of the church. This commitment applies to everyone, regardless of age, gender, ethnic identity, disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief, economic resources, or marital status (marriage/civil partnership/single/widowed).
  
- 4. Therefore, as members and workers of this church, we will always seek to create and maintain a safe and inclusive environment for everyone, both by adopting safeguarding policies and by working to ensure that they are observed in practice.** In more detail, we commit ourselves to:
  - the care and welfare of all children, young people and adults
  - the safeguarding and protection of all children and young people, and of adults at risk
  - the creation of a church environment which is safe and caring for everyone, and where the dignity of each person is respected
  - the establishment and maintenance of appropriate health and safety arrangements (including fire safety), as well as first aid support and online safety policies
  - an informed vigilance about the dangers of all forms of harm, neglect and abuse within all aspects of work in the church (where by ‘abuse’ we mean not only physical and sexual abuse, but also bullying and coercive control)
  - ensuring that everyone who holds a position of responsibility within the church understands the importance of keeping people safe, and is aware of how to respond appropriately to potential harm, neglect or abuse
  - working together with statutory and voluntary agencies, as well as other denominations and faith-based organisations, in order to promote these goals.

5. We recognise that, as members and workers in the church, **we share a responsibility to help prevent any form of harm, neglect or abuse, and also to ensure the well-being and pastoral care of those who are, or may be, at risk.** For these purposes, we define people 'at risk' as all children and young persons under 18, and any adults who, by reason of age, illness, mental or physical disability, or other situation, are permanently or temporarily unable to take care of themselves, or to protect themselves against significant harm, abuse or exploitation.
6. **We will always acknowledge that the welfare of any child or young person, or adult at risk, is paramount.** The priority will therefore always be to act in their best interests, following legislation, statutory guidance and good practice guidance in order to enable them to gain access to appropriate support and protection. **Wherever possible, children and young people, parents or carers, and adults at risk will be informed of this policy and our procedures.**
7. **In matters relating to safeguarding, we will always maintain confidentiality, except where to do so would place an individual at risk of harm.**
8. **We will appoint a church Safeguarding Coordinator and Deputy Safeguarding Coordinator** to advise the Elders on matters relating to safeguarding, and to act as a first point of contact in relation to any concern about a safeguarding issue relating to the church. The Safeguarding Coordinator and the Deputy Safeguarding Coordinator will at all times be guided by the policy and good practice guidance of the United Reformed Church, as set out in its 2020 document 'Good Practice 5' (see further, para. 21 below).
9. **We will seek to identify and manage risks by developing appropriate risk assessments.** We will also seek to ensure that adequate insurance is in place to cover identified risks; and that, for activities with children or people with special needs, signed consent forms will be obtained. (See also para. 12 below).
10. **We will provide training, support and appropriate resources** to all whose responsibilities within the church include matters relating to safety and welfare.
11. **We will exercise proper care in the selection and appointment of key workers within the church.** This will include the church's Trustees, and all those who will work with children or adults potentially at risk within the church – whether they are lay or ordained, and whether they are paid or voluntary workers. We will use official DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) checks, and - where appropriate – other information to assist us in minimising the risk of harm, neglect or abuse.
12. We recognise that proper concern for matters of safety and welfare is an ever-present need that requires constant vigilance. **We will therefore seek to create a culture of safety and welfare that will permeate all our activities.** To this end, we will ask all the main groups within the church both to identify and to monitor potential risks and safeguarding issues within their sphere of responsibility. We will also seek to promote

an awareness of the importance of considering risks and safeguarding issues whenever fresh kinds of activity are proposed.

**13. We will seek to respond without delay to every concern, incident or complaint made to us about issues of safety and welfare.** Where it seems that a child or adult has been harmed, or is at risk of harm, we will co-operate as necessary with statutory welfare agencies, the police, and ecumenical partners, while maintaining the confidentiality of any investigations by ensuring that information is shared only with those directly involved.

**14. We are committed to ensuring that any allegations, concerns and complaints about abuse or neglect are recorded accurately, reported promptly and shared safely within and outside the denomination.**

**15. If a child, young person or adult makes a disclosure or allegation that they are being abused or have been abused, it is important that the person being told:**

- stays calm and listens carefully
- reassures them that they have done the right thing in telling
- does not investigate or ask leading questions
- explains that they will need to tell someone else if anyone is at risk of harm, in order to help them
- does not promise to keep secret what they have been told
- informs the church Safeguarding or Deputy Safeguarding Coordinator within 24 hours
- makes a written record of the disclosure, allegation or incident and signs and dates this record. This should be given to the church Safeguarding Coordinator, who will store it securely.

The Safeguarding Coordinator will then follow the procedures prescribed by the good practice guidance of the United Reformed Church in 'Good Practice 5' (see para 21 below).

**16. We commit ourselves to challenge any abuse of power, especially where it involves someone in a position of trust.**

**17. Where someone has suffered abuse, we will offer full pastoral support.** Such support will be separate from any formal action taken as regards the abuse.

**18. Where someone is considered to pose a potential risk** to the welfare of children or adults or the life of the church, **we will offer appropriate support** including (as necessary) supervision, referral to appropriate agencies, and implementation of safeguarding contracts.

**19. If it becomes known that someone within our congregation is known to have harmed children or adults,** we will inform the Church Safeguarding Coordinator and the Synod Safeguarding Officer within 24 hours, and co-operate with them and the

relevant statutory authorities to put in place a plan to minimise the risk of harm to children, young people and adults.

- 20. We will review our safeguarding policy, practices and procedures annually**, taking account of lessons learned from experience during the year, as well as changes in legislation and good practice guidance.
- 21. As regards good practice guidance, we commit ourselves to follow the practices recommended in the United Reformed Church's GOOD PRACTICE 5 document**, published in 2020 (*Good Practice 5 – Policy and Good Practice Guidance in Safeguarding Children, Young People and Adults at Risk*, London, United Reformed Church, available electronically on the website of the United Reformed Church). In particular, we endorse, and will share with appropriate people, the guidance contained in some of the Appendices to *Good Practice 5* – namely, the guidance concerning the roles of the church's Safeguarding and Deputy Safeguarding Officers; the Code of Conduct for working with Children and Young People; the Code of Conduct for Working with Adults; and the guidance on procedures following a disclosure or allegation of abuse.
- 22. We expect all Trustees, paid staff and volunteers to work within the guidance contained in the Codes of Conduct described in para. 21.** Appropriate action will be taken by the church if the provisions of the relevant Code are not followed.
- 23. We will not let our church premises to any group, organisation or individual which does not endorse the affirmation set out in para. 3 above.** When the church premises are let, the hirers should abide by their own safeguarding policy (with appropriate insurance backing), if they have one. **If hirers are not able to show the church such a policy, they must agree to abide by the church's own safeguarding policy, including the Codes of Conduct referred to in para. 21.** Each hiring body will also be required by contract to take all reasonable steps to prevent the occurrence of harm, neglect, illness, loss or damage.
- 24. We recognise that special issues relating to safeguarding arise in relation to online activities.** The principles set out in this Safeguarding Policy will be applied in the online context, and we are working to develop a Code of Conduct for church members in relation to such activities.
- 25. We will display in our church premises a 'Safeguarding Poster',** which will give details of how to contact the Safeguarding Officer and Deputy Safeguarding Officer, and of how to obtain copies of this Statement.
- 26. Any changes to this Safeguarding Policy Statement must be formally approved by the Minister and Elders** of the church, acting also as its Trustees.